

Diagram 1 The Tree of Life

King Solomon (*Book of Proverbs*)

For many years the Qabalah appeared to be lost in obscurity, particularly in its practical applications, yet today, with so many people searching for spiritual roots, and looking for meaning and purpose in their lives, it is undergoing a remarkable come-back. Its influence has not only been in the spiritual realms, however, for it has also exerted a

—

- based on a map of the consciousness
- (a map of the consciousness) called the Tree of Life.

- a coherent world view
 - (a coherent world view) of the nature of human existence, and
 - (a coherent world view) of the relationships between
 - ourselves and other beings,
 - ourselves and our planet, and
 - ourselves and the universe.

Genesis 2.9: Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, **the tree of life** also in the midst of the garden, ***and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.***

ground, and blew into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

⁸And Jehovah God planted a garden in Eden, to the east; and He put the man whom He had formed there. ⁹And out of the ground Jehovah God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food. The Tree of Life was also in the middle of the garden; also the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. ¹⁰And a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it was divided and became four heads. ¹¹The name of the first was Pishon—it is the one surrounding all the land of Havilah, where gold is; ¹²and the gold of that land is good; there is bdellium gum resin, and the onyx stone. ¹³And the name of the second river is Gihon—it is the one surrounding all the land of Cush. ¹⁴And the name of the third river is Hiddakel—it is the one going east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.

formed of face watered earth up
639 5301 125 6083 12.0 430 3068
יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם עָפָר מִדְּהָאֲדָמָה וּפָח בָּאָפִי
his into and the from dust the God Jehovah
nostrils blew ground (of) man
430 3068 5193 2416 5315 120 1961 2416 5397
8 נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים יָדָיו הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה: וַיֵּטַע יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים
God Jehovah And living soul a man the and life breath
planted became of
9 נָדְבַעַדָן מִקֶּדֶם וַיֵּשֶׁם שֵׁם אֶת־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יָצָר: וַיִּצְמַח
made And had He whom the there and the to in a
spring formed man put east Eden garden
2895 4758 2530 6086 3605 127 4480 430 3068
יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִדְּהָאֲדָמָה כָּל־עֵץ נֹחַמֵּד לְמַרְאֵה וְטוֹב
and the to pleasant tree every the from God Jehovah
ground
1847 1588 8432 2416 6086 3978
לְמֵאכָל וְעֵץ הַחַיִּים בְּתוֹךְ הָעֵץ וְעֵץ הָרָעַת טוֹב וְרָע:
and good knowl- the the and the the in life the and food for
evil of edge of tree garden of midst (was) of tree
1961 6504 8033 1588 4325 5731 5927 5104
10 וְנָהָר יֵצֵא מִעֵדֶן לְהַשְׁקֹת אֶת־הָעֵדֶן וּמִשָּׁם יִסְרָד וְהָיָה
and was it from and the water to from went a And
became divided there garden Eden out river
5467 1931 6376 259 8034 7218 702
11 לְאַרְבַּעָה רָאשִׁים: שֵׁם הָאֶחָד פִּישׁוֹן הוּא הַסֹּבֵב אֶת
(one) the (is it) Pishon one the The heads four into
surrounding (is) of name
1931 776 2096 2091 8033 834 2341 776
12 כָּל־אֶרֶץ הַחַיִּלָּה אֲשֶׁר־שָׁם הַזָּהָב: וְהָיָה הָאֶרֶץ הַהִוא
that land the And (is) gold where Havilah the all
of land
1521 8145 5104 8034 7718 68 916 8033 2896
13 טוֹב שָׁם הַבְּרִלָח וְאֵבֶן הַשֵּׁהָם: וְשֵׁם־הַנָּהָר הַשֵּׁנִי גִיחוֹן
Gihon second the the And onyx the and bdellium there good
(is) river of name of stone resin gum (is) (is)
7992 5104 8034 3578 776 5437
14 הוּא הַסֹּבֵב אֶת כָּל־אֶרֶץ כּוּשׁ: וְשֵׁם־הַנָּהָר הַשְּׁלִישִׁי
(is) third the the And Cush the all one the (is) it
river of name of land surrounding

Tree: wood and sticks

6086. עֵץ `ets ates

from 06095; a tree (from its firmness); hence, wood (plural sticks):--+ carpenter, gallows, helve, + pine, plank, staff, stalk, stick, stock, timber, tree, wood.

Life: alive (as opposed to cooked), fresh (fresh plant, fresh water, fresh start), strong (renewal)

2416. חַי chay khah'-ee

from 02421; alive; hence, raw (flesh); fresh (plant, water, year), strong; also (as noun, especially in the feminine singular and masculine plural) life (or living thing), whether literally or figuratively:--+ age, alive, appetite, (wild) beast, company, congregation, life(-time), live(-ly), living (creature, thing), maintenance, + merry, multitude, + (be) old, quick, raw, running, springing, troop.

Knowledge: cunning (knowing, skillful, artful / sly, deceitful), and awareness

1847. דַּעַת da`ath *dah'-ath*

from 03045; knowledge:--cunning, (ig-)norantly, know(-ledge), (un-)awares (wittingly).

Good: the widest sense of good

2896. טוֹב towb *tobe*

from 02895; good (as an adjective) in the widest sense; used likewise as a noun, both in the masculine and the feminine, the singular and the plural (good, a good or good thing, a good man or woman; the good, goods or good things, good men or women), also as an adverb (well):--beautiful, best, better, bountiful, cheerful, at ease, × fair (word), (be in) favour, fine, glad, good (deed, -lier, -liet, -ly, -ness, -s), graciously, joyful, kindly, kindness, liketh (best), loving, merry, × most, pleasant, + pleaseth, pleasure, precious, prosperity, ready, sweet, wealth, welfare, (be) well ((-favoured)).

Evil: Hebrew RA, bad, naturally bad, bad morals, adverse, adversity, calamity, wrong

7451. רָע ra`rah

from 07489; bad or (as noun) evil (natural or moral):--adversity, affliction, bad, calamity, + displease(-ure), distress, evil((-favouredness), man, thing), + exceedingly, × great, grief(-vous), harm, heavy, hurt(-ful), ill (favoured), + mark, mischief(-vous), misery, naught(-ty), noisome, + not please, sad(-ly), sore, sorrow, trouble, vex, wicked(-ly, -ness, one), worse(-st), wretchedness, wrong. (Incl. feminine raaah; as adjective or noun.).

There is diversity in every part of Creation. Absolute Unity only prevails in the Creator.

CHAPTER TWO:

Beis

The Symbol of Blessing and Creation; Duality and Plurality



The **ב** is the second of the holy letters. God began the Torah with it — **בְּרֵאשִׁית**, *In the beginning* — for it is the initial of **בְּרֵכָה**, *blessing*, and **בְּרִיאָה**, *Creation*.

The Midrash relates that **ב** was chosen because every being — from the heavenly hosts, to man, to the tiniest creature — blesses God with the **ב**, saying **לְעוֹלָם אָמֵן וְאָמֵן**, *Blessed is HASHEM forever, amen and amen* (*Psalms 89:53*).

With its *gematria* [numerical value] of two, **ב** represents the concept of duality, for there is diversity in every part of Creation (**בְּרִיאָה**). Only in the Creator Himself does absolute Oneness prevail. Literally, *beis* means *house* (**בֵּית**) and alludes to the focal point of holiness on earth — the **בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ** [*Beis HaMikdash*], *Sanctuary or Holy Temple* in Jerusalem; and to the **בֵּית** of man, which he can transform into a **מִקְדָּשׁ מִנִּיָּה**, *miniature sanctuary*.

Duality of Heart or Drive (within oneself):

□ **Two Drives — Two Hearts:** בחירה

There is another pair created by God which is meant to be unified: יצר הטוב [yetzer hatov], good inclination, and the יצר הרע [yetzer hara], evil inclination.

Angels are purely spiritual beings, with but one desire — to do God's will. Their "heart" is called לב, *lev* (Rashi, Genesis 18:5). In the heart of man, however, yetzer hatov, the inclination to goodness and spirituality, struggles for supremacy with yetzer hara, the urge toward evil and hedonism. Man's heart, with its two opposing drives, is called לבב, *levav*, with a double ב, for man has conflicting desires that propel him in different directions. His conscience tells him to study Torah and forgo unnecessary pleasure; his lower craving tells him to read worthless but enjoyable trivia and to indulge his animalistic appetites.

Man is commanded to subjugate his yetzer hara to the service of God as we read in the Shema: וְאַהַבְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְבְּךָ, You shall love Hashem, your God, with all your heart (Deuteronomy 6:5); the double ב implies that we are to love God with both inclinations (Rashi). You shall

[62] The Wisdom in the Hebrew Alphabet

love God with your physical as well as your spiritual existence, and subjugate all your desires to Him as an offering of love (R' Hirsch). This does not mean that man should *deprive* himself of all enjoyment; to the contrary, he is commanded to serve God with his yetzer hara. How can an "evil" inclination serve God? If man indulges his body enough for it to be healthy and content, if he permits himself sufficient pleasure and relaxation for his mind to function well, then even his yetzer hara is helping him serve God in a fuller way. By achieving such a balance in his life, the Jew serves God with his pleasures as with his pieties, for all aspects of his activity are directed toward the same lofty goal.

Man has two drives so that he can choose to which he wants to give priority — as the Torah says: See, I place before you this day blessing and curse. The blessing — if you will heed the mitzvos ... and the curse if you will not heed the mitzvos ... (Deuteronomy 11:26-28).

Not always is the distinction between good and evil clearcut. In fact, there are no absolutes; each action or trait has its time and place. For instance, we are commanded to be merciful, just as God is merciful, but God commanded King Saul to annihilate the Amalekites. In his "kindness," Saul failed to destroy them totally. Consequently generations later, Jewry was threatened with annihilation by Haman, a scion of the Amalekite Agag, whom Saul had permitted to live.

In order to make the right choice, man must first distinguish good from evil, and identify evil masquerading as good. To this end, he was endowed with בינה [binah], understanding, the power of differentiation and deduction (see more on binah below).

□ **Two Worlds**

God created two worlds: This World and the World to Come. Man was



It is ours to choose between blessing — unhindered progressive development; and curse — emptiness, shallowness, worthlessness. Through our own free choice, we create for ourselves one or the other of these alternative conditions.

with new wine. ¹¹My son, do not reject the chastening of Jehovah; and do not loathe His correction; ¹²for whom Jehovah loves He corrects, even as a father the son he loves.

¹³Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gets understanding. ¹⁴For its gain is better than the gain from silver; and its produce more than fine gold; ¹⁵she is more precious than rubies; and all the things you can desire are not to be compared with her. ¹⁶Length of days is in her right hand; riches and honor in her left hand.

¹⁷Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace. ¹⁸She is a tree of life to the ones who lay hold on her; and happy are the ones holding her fast. ¹⁹Jehovah founded the earth by wisdom; He founded the heavens by understanding; ²⁰the depths were broken up by His knowledge; and the clouds dropped down the dew. ²¹My son, do not let them depart from your eyes; keep sound wisdom and judgment; ²²and they shall be life to your soul, and grace to your neck; ²³then you shall walk in your way safely; and your foot shall not stumble. ²⁴When you lie down, you shall not dread; yea, you shall lie down and your sleep shall be sweet. ²⁵Do not be afraid of sudden terror; nor of the destruction of the wicked, when it comes. ²⁶For Jehovah shall be at your side; and He shall keep your foot from being caught.

²⁷Do not withhold good

your	shall and	your	all	the from and your from Jehovah
barns	filled be	produce		of firstfruits substance
3985	1121	3068	4148	6555 3342 8492 7647
11	שבע ותירוש יקבץ יפרצו:	מוסר יהוה בני אל-תמאס		
do	not my	Jehovah The	shall	wine your (with) and (with)
reject do	son	of chastening	burst	vats wine new ;plenty
3198	3068	157	834	8433 697.3 408
12	ואל-תקן בתוכחתו:	כי את אשר-יאדב יהוה יוכיח		
He	Jehovah loves whom	foi	His	do and
corrects			correction	loathe not
120	2451	4672	120	835
13	וכאב את-בן ירצה:	אשרי אדם מצא חכמה ואדם		
the and	wisdom finding the	Blessed is he	the	as even
man	(is)	with pleased	son	father a
2742	3701	5505	5504	2896
14	יפיק תבונה:	כי טוב סחרה מפחד-כסף ומחרוץ		
more and	silver the than	its	better is	For understanding
gold than	of gain	gain		getting
7737	3808	2656	3605	6443
15	תבואתה:	יקרה היא מפניו וכל-הפציד לא ישוּב-בה:		
with are	not your all and	than	she (More)	produce its
her likened	delights	jewels	precious	
1870	3519	6239	8040	3225
16	ארך ימים בימינה בשמאולה עשר וכבוד:	דרכיה		
ways Her	and riches	left her in	her in	days Length
honor		(hand)	(hand)right	(is) of
2388	2416	6086	7965	5410
18	דרכיה-נעים וכר-נתובתיה שלום:	עץ-חיים היא למחויקים		
those for	she life tree A	are	her	and pleasant- (are)
hold taking	(is)	of	peace	paths all
3559	776	3245	2451	3068
19	בה ותמכיה מאשר:	יהוה בחכמה יסד ארץ פוּג		
He	the founded by	Jehovah	(are)	those and on
fixed	earth	wisdom	blessed	her holding her
7491	7834	1234	8415	1847
20	שמים בתבונה:	בדעתו תהומות נבקעו ושהקים ירעפר		
dropped	the and	were the	His By	under- by the
down	clouds	up broken	depths	knowledge standing heavens
1961	4009	8454	5341	5869
21	של:	בני אל-לדו מעיניך נצר תושיה ומנוחה:	יהיו	
they and	and	sound	keep your from	not let My
be shall	discretion	wisdom	eyes depart them	son
1870	982	1980	1621	258
23	חיים לנפשך וחן לנגרתך:	או תלך לבטח דרכך		
your (in)	with shall you	Then	your to	and your to life
way	safety	walk	neck	grace soul
6149	7901	6342/3808	7901	5061
24	ורגלך לא תגוף:	אם-תשכב לא תפחד ושכבת וערכה		
shall and	you and shall you not	rest you	When	shall not your and
sweet be	lie shall dread			stumble foot
7563	7722	6597	6343	3372
25	שנתך:	אל-תירא מפחד פתאם ומשאת רשעים כי		
for the	the of and	sudden	from	be do Not your
wicked	of ruin	dread	afraid	sleep
408	3921	7272	8104	3689
26	תבא:	בי-יהוה יהיה בבסלך ושמך רגלך מלכך:	אל-	
Not	from your	He and	your at	shall Jehovah For is it
capture	foot	keep shall	loins	be coming

from 06095; a tree (from its firmness); hence, wood (plural sticks)

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN:

Tzaddi

The Symbol of Righteousness and Humility



LOWING WIND,
&
GROWING
WOOD



The proper name of the eighteenth letter of the *Aleph-Beis* is צדי, *tzaddi*, but it is commonly called צדיק, *tzaddik*. According to *Magen David*, the *tzaddik* results from a run-on pronunciation of the two letters *tzaddi kuf*, which, when spoken rapidly, sounds like *tzaddik-kuf*. An additional source of this name for the letter is the Talmud (*Shabbos* 104a) which speaks of the allusions of the two forms of this letter with the words: צדי כפופה צדי פשוטה צדיק כפוף צדיק פשוט the bent tzaddi and the straight tzaddi [symbolize] the bent tzaddik [righteous person] and the erect tzaddik. The bent form, צ, is used at the beginning and in the middle of a word, while the straight י is used at its end. As we shall see below, the letter symbolizes the righteousness of Cod and devout human beings — another reason for the *tzaddik* pronunciation.

Wood
'Growing'



CHAPTER SIXTEEN:

Ayin

The Symbol of Sight and Insight



The ע is the letter of perception and insight, for its name עֵין means eye. As the organ of sight, *ayin* reveals more to man than any of the other four senses, as the Sages state: אֵינוֹ דּוֹמֶה שְׁמִיעָה לְרֹאִיָּה, *hearing is not comparable to seeing* (Mechilta, Shemos 19:9).

The word עֵין (related to מַעֲיֵן) also means a spring of water (as in Genesis 16:7). Just as a spring brings water from the dark depths to the light of the sun, so the eye brings the perception of the world into the human mind. Through the narrow eye the entire universe is brought into focus (R' Hirsch, Genesis 3:5). As the Midrash puts it, there are two hundred forty-eight organs in the human body, and their movements are directed by the eyes.

The eye is the window of the brain, since it is through the sense of sight that man perceives external impressions that he then internalizes, enabling him to understand them more thoroughly (Malbim).

עולם האותיות

[171]

